Research Notes

Research Overview:

In the record, Elizabeth Louise Roach (later Whalen) looks steady: a daughter raised in an intact Catholic household, surrounded by siblings who survived to adulthood, working after high school, and marrying later than many of her peers. But family memory complicates the neatness of routine milestones. Elizabeth could be firm, careful with money, and unbending in her opinions—traits that read less like hardness than like a strategy for keeping a household afloat. Illness in childhood, deep loss in adulthood, and cognitive decline later on tested that steadiness. What emerges is not a story of collapse, but of endurance—of a woman continually trying to make life hold together as conditions shifted around her.

Speculation Narrative:

5 Jul 1895 – **Born** at Ada, Kent, Michigan, on the McEvoy farm. Although her parents lived at what was then 404 Lafayette St., The same house has the address 710 Lafayette NE, Grand Rapids, Michigan.[1]

Childhood residence and family property.

During Elizabeth Roach's childhood, the family lived at 704 Lafayette NE in Grand Rapids, a house purchased by her maternal grandparents, the McEvoys. While the McEvoys had operated the property as a boarding house, it functioned as a single-family home during the years Elizabeth was growing up, accommodating a rapidly expanding household. Her father, Samuel Roach, had boarded there after arriving from Canada for work. The family also had ongoing access to the McEvoy family farm in Ada, Michigan.

[1] "Michigan Births, 1867-1902", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:NQZK-DQH : Sun Mar 10 14:11:13 UTC 2024), Entry for Bessie L Roach and S J Roach, 05 Jul 1895.

5 Aug 1897 – **Birth of brother Charles Hubert "Hugh" Roach (1897 - 1974**) at Grand Rapids, Kent, Michigan.[2]

1 Dec 1899 – **Birth of sister Francis Lamira Roach (1899 - 1983**) at Grand Rapids, Kent, Michigan.[3]

1900 - U.S. Census.[4] - need to find. Should be at 404 N Lafayette in Grand Rapids.

15 Nov 1901 – **Birth of brother Gerald Edward Roach (1901 - 1955**) at Grand Rapids, Kent, Michigan.[5]

c. 1902 — Childhood illness. Family accounts indicate that Elizabeth suffered from rheumatic fever at approximately age seven. She survived the illness, which was often fatal in children during this period, and was cared for at home.

5 Aug 1897 – **Birth of brother S. Jerome Roach (1805 - 1970**) at Grand Rapids, Kent, Michigan.[6]

15 Apr 1907 - First Communion at Grand Rapids, Kent, Michigan. Took the name of "Germaine" for her Confirmation.[7]

1910 - U.S. Census in Grand Rapids, Kent, Michigan.[8]

Samuel Roach - head of household, male, white, age 44, married, born in Canada, father born in Ireland, mother born in Washington, DC.

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[2] "Michigan Births, 1867-1902", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:NQXZ-1YC: Sat Mar 09 03:34:17 UTC 2024), Entry for Chas.h. Roach and Samuel Roach, 05 Aug 1897.

[3] "Michigan Births, 1867-1902", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:NQF3-BQ7: Thu Jul 11 00:46:14 UTC 2024), Entry for Frances Lamyra Roach and Samuel Roach, 17 Dec 1899.

[4] 1900 census needed

[5] "Michigan Births, 1867-1902", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:NQ6V-31M: Thu Jul 11 01:03:12 UTC 2024), Entry for Gerald Edward Roach and Samuel James Roach, 15 Nov 1901.

[6] Social Security Administration. Social Security Death Index, Master File. Social Security Administration. Original data

[7] First Communion Citation

[8] "United States Census, 1910", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:ML5T-LN7: Tue Jul 23 16:28:11 UTC 2024), Entry for Samuel J Roach and Marie Roach, 1910.

Marie Roach - female, white, age 34, married, born in Michigan, parents born in Canada/ Ireland.

Helen Roach - female, white, age 25, single, born in Michigan, parents born in Canada/Michigan.

Bessie Roach - female, white, age 14, single, born in Michigan, parents born in Canada/Michigan.

Hubert Roach - male, white, age 12, single, born in Michigan, parents born in Canada/Michigan.

Frances Roach- female, white, age 10, single, born in Michigan, parents born in Canada/Michigan.

Gerald Roach- male, white, age 8, single, born in Michigan, parents born in Canada/Michigan.

Jerome Roach- male, white, age 10, single, born in Michigan, parents born in Canada/Michigan.

Lueien Roach - male, white, age 0, single, born in Michigan, parents born in Canada/Michigan.

1920 - U.S. Census in Grand Rapids, Kent, Michigan.[9]

Samuel J Roach - head, owns, male, white, age 54, married, can read, can write, born Canada, father born England, mother born Ireland, mailman.

Mary E Roach - wife, female, white, age 47, married, can read, can write, born Michigan, father born Canada, mother born Ireland.

Helen M Roach - daughter , female, white, age 25, born Michigan, father born Canada, mother born Michigan.

Elizabeth L Roach - daughter , female, white, age 24, born Michigan, father born Canada, mother born Michigan.

C Hubert Roach - son, male, white, age 22, born Michigan, father born Canada, mother born Michigan.

[9] "United States Census, 1920", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZ3Y-724: Thu Mar 07 23:40:17 UTC 2024), Entry for Samuel J Roach and Mary E Roach, 1920.

Frances L Roach - daughter , female, white, age 20, born Michigan, father born Canada, mother born Michigan.

Gerald Roach - son, male, white, age 18, born Michigan, father born Canada, mother born Michigan.

S. Jerome Roach - son, male, white, age 14, born Michigan, father born Canada, mother born Michigan.

Dorothy E Roach daughter , female, white, age 12, born Michigan, father born Canada, mother born Michigan.

Thomas G F Roach - son, male, white, age 10, born Michigan, father born Canada, mother born Michigan.

c. 1920 - As part of documenting Elizabeth Roach Whalen's courtship and marriage, Mary shared stories about her mother during a trip we took together to Grand Rapids. Moving through the city, Mary pointed out places where her parents' relationship had taken shape and retold the stories she had heard as a daughter.

She recalled that her parents first met on a double date with Elizabeth's younger sister, Francis, and that during the evening the sisters stepped into the powder room, where Elizabeth told Francis they would be switching dates, as she was interested in Edward. Mary also identified the Roach family home as the setting for their later courtship, where her parents sat on the front porch swing while Elizabeth's sister Helen played the piano in the parlor. Other locations Mary noted included the stretch of river where Edward later proposed during a rowboat outing, the church where her parents were married, and the hotel where the wedding reception was held. We also visited cemeteries, homes, and other places connected to the family. Hearing these stories while standing in the places where events occurred gave added dimension to records already in hand.

17 May 1924 - Marriage in Grand Rapids, Kent, Michigan to Edward Paul Whalen at St. Alphonsus Catholic Church information.[10]

29 Nov 1925 – **Birth of son Edward Paul Whelan (1925 - 1945**) at Evanston, Cook, Illinois.[11]

24 Jan 1927 – **Birth of son William Roach Whelan (1925 - 1945)** at Evanston, Cook, Illinois.[12]

12 Jun 1928 – **Birth of son James Michael Whelan (1925 - 1945)** at Evanston, Cook, Illinois.[13]

5 Dec 1929– **Birth of son Thomas Patrick Whelan (1925 - 1945)** at Evanston, Cook, Illinois.[14]

c. 1930 - By the end of 1929, Elizabeth had been married for five years and was the mother of four young sons. During these early years of marriage, Edward worked as a traveling furniture salesman, often away from home as he covered a Midwestern sales territory.

The family lived in rented apartments in Chicago and moved frequently. When the economic collapse began, its implications were not immediately clear, but the effects of the Depression soon reached their commission-dependent household. How the family adjusted as Edward's income declined—or at times may have disappeared—cannot be traced directly in the records. What can be seen is a period of constrained circumstances, marked by repeated moves and decisions that suggest financial pressure.

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[10] "Michigan Marriages, 1868-1925", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:NQQJ-3KW: Wed Jul 24 06:51:38 UTC 2024), Entry for Edward Whalen and James Whalen, 17 May 1924.

[11] "Illinois, Cook County, Birth Certificates, 1871-1949", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVPH-Y1CL: Sat Mar 09 12:11:24 UTC 2024), Entry for and Edward Paul Whalen, 1 December 1925.

[12] "Illinois, Cook County, Birth Certificates, 1871-1949", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QKM7-T2ST: Thu Mar 07 21:42:26 UTC 2024), Entry for William Roach Whalen and Edward Paul Whalen, 1 February 1927.

[13] "Illinois, Cook County, Birth Certificates, 1871-1949", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVPH-1HG4: Thu Mar 07 14:08:17 UTC 2024), Entry for Michael James Whalen and Edward Paul Whalen, 1 July 1928.

[14] "Illinois, Cook County, Birth Certificates, 1871-1949", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVPH-1KBW: Sun Mar 10 04:14:45 UTC 2024), Entry for Thomas Whalen and Edward Paul Whalen, 18 December 1929.

It was during this period that son, Thomas, was left for a time with Elizabeth's parents in Grand Rapids after the family traveled there together. Which child was best suited to remain, and how that decision was made, is not known, but the choice reflects the realities facing a young family struggling during the early years of the Depression.

1930 - U.S. Census in Chicago, Cook, Illinois.[15]

Edward P Whalen - Head, rents, worth ?, has a radio, male, white, age 38, married, first at age 32, born Kansas, parents born Ireland/ Washington DC, salesman, furniture.

Bessie L Whalen - wife, female, white, age 38, married, first at age 28, born Michigan, parents born Canada/Michigan.

Edw P Whalen -son, male, white, single, age 4, born Illinois, parents born Kansas /Michigan.

Wm Roach Whalen - son, male, white, single, age 3, born Illinois, parents born Kansas /Michigan.

James M Whalen - son, male, white, single, age 1, born Illinois, parents born Kansas /Michigan.

Thomas Patrech Whalen - son, male, white, single, age 0, born Illinois, parents born Kansas /Michigan.

7 Jul 1932 – **Birth of son John Richard Whalen (1925 - 1945)** at Evanston, Cook, Illinois.[16]

19 Mar 1935 - Death of mother Mary Ellen McEvoy (1872 - 1935) at Grand Rapids, Kent, Michigan.[17]

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[15] 1930 U.S. census, XXX City, County, State, population schedule, township/city, enumeration district (ED) X, p. X (stamped or penned), p. XA or X B 9penned), dwelling xx, family xx, Ancestor Name; image, *Ancestry* (http://www.ancestry.com: accessed 13 January 2026); citing NARA microfilm publication T9, roll xxx.

[16] "Illinois, Cook County, Birth Certificates, 1871-1949", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QV3G-6KG4: Sat Jul 06 20:55:58 UTC 2024), Entry for Whalen and Edward Paul Whalen, 27 Jul 1932.

[17] "Michigan Death Certificates, 1921-1952", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KF32-KR9: Sun Jul 21 19:23:36 UTC 2024), Entry for Mary E Roach and Charles P Mcevoy, 19 Mar 1935.

8 Aug 1935 – **Birth of daughter Mary Whalen (1925 - 1945)** at Evanston, Cook, Illinois.[18]

19 Mar 1935 - Death of father Samuel James Roach (1872 - 1935) Grand Rapids, Kent, Michigan.[19]

1940 - U.S. Census in Chicago, Cook, Illinois. Living at 342 Campbell Chicago Cook, Illinois[20]

Edward Whalen - head of household, male, white, age 45, married, 3rd grade, born Kansas, lived in the same place in 1935, worked the last week of March 1940, occupation is salesman, Industry is Furniture, worked x weeks in 1939, earned $x in 1939, did not make over $50 in other income.

Elizabeth Whalen (provided information)—wife, female, white, age 41, married, 3 years of high school, born Michigan, lived in the same place in 1935, did not work the last week of March 1940, occupation is homemaker, worked 0 weeks in 1939, made $0 in income.

Edward Whalen - son, male, white, age 14, single, 2 years of high school, born Illinois, lived in the same place in 1935, did not work the last week of March 1940, occupation is student, worked 0 weeks in 1939, made $0 in income.

William Whalen - son, male, white, age 13, single, 1 year of high school, born Illinois, lived in the same place in 1935, did not work the last week of March 1940, occupation is student, worked 0 weeks in 1939, made $0 in income.

James Whalen - son, male, white, age 11, single, 7 years of grammar school, born Illinois, lived in the same place in 1935, did not work **the last** week of March 1940, occupation is student, worked 0 weeks in 1939, made $0 in income.

Thomas Whalen- son, male, white, age 10, single, 6 years of grammar school, born Illinois, lived in the same place in 1935, did not work the last

[18] Birth Record for Mary Whalen

[19] "Michigan Death Certificates, 1921-1952", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KF32-RC6: Tue Jul 16 08:28:32 UTC 2024), Entry for Samuel J Roach and Charles H Roach, 12 May 1936.

[20] "United States Census, 1940", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K49C-V4X: Sat Mar 09 14:07:40 UTC 2024), Entry for Edward Whalen and Elizabeth Whalen, 1940.

week of March 1940, occupation is student, worked 0 weeks in 1939, made $0 in income.

John R Whalen - son, male, white, age 7, single, 2 years of grammar school, born Illinois, lived in the same place in 1935, did not work the last week of March 1940, occupation is student, worked 0 weeks in 1939, made $0 in income.

Mary Whalen- daughter, female, white, age 4, single, 0 years school, born Illinois, lived in the same place in 1935, did not work the last week of March 1940, worked 0 weeks in 1939, made $0 in income**.**

c. 1940 - By the time of the 1940 census, the Whalen family's circumstances had shifted. They owned a home, and the older boys were in high school, no longer infants in rented apartments. At the same time, the approach of World War II introduced a different kind of uncertainty. Edward had served during World War I as a medic at a military base in New York, and both he and Elizabeth were single-issue voters opposed to any war.

As the decade began, their sons' ages were aligning with the likelihood of military service. Their youngest child and only daughter, Mary, was five years old. The pressures facing the family in the 1940s differed from those of the Depression years, but they carried their own weight and consequences.

26 May 1945 - Death of son Edward Paul Whalen (1925–1945) at Yokohama, Kanagawa, Japan.

c. 1945 - During World War II, two of Elizabeth's sons entered military service. Family recollections indicate that she and Edward made deliberate choices in how their sons served, weighing risk and duration. Their oldest son, Edward, entered the Army Air Forces, where extended training in New Mexico was thought to reduce the likelihood of combat. Their second son, William, served in the Coast Guard. Details of his service are limited, but he returned home after the war.

Elizabeth's experience of the war did not end with its conclusion. In the years that followed, she continued to pray novenas on Sunday afternoons for her missing son. Like many parents who never recovered a body, she did not accept his death as certain and held open the possibility that he might still be alive.

During the 1950s, the remaining children reached adulthood. Sons William, John, and James married, and their daughter Mary attended college and became a teacher. By the middle of the decade, the household that had once

been shaped by young children and wartime uncertainty had largely dispersed into separate adult lives.

At some point during these years, Elizabeth began to show signs of dementia, though the onset cannot be dated with precision. By the time of Edward Whalen's death in 1960, the family was aware of her condition. In the years that followed, her children managed the practical and emotional consequences of her decline as Elizabeth struggled with the effects of the illness.

1950 - U.S. Census in Chicago, Cook, Illinois. Living at 342 Campbell Chicago Cook, Illinois[21]

Edward P Whalen - head, white, male, 57, married, born Kansas, worked last week as a furniture salesman.

Elizabeth L Whalen, wife, white, female, 40, married, born Michigan, Home

James M Whalen - son, white, male, 20, never married, born Illinois.

John R Whalen - son, white, male, 20, never married, born Illinois.

Mary Whalen - daughter, white, female, 15, never married, born Illinois.

7 Sep 1955 – **Death of brother Gerald Edward Roach (1894- 1933)** at Grand Rapids, Kent, Michigan[22]

In approximately 1958, Edward Whalen was diagnosed with throat cancer, and his larynx was removed. In the years leading up to his death, the family faced increasing financial uncertainty. Edward and Elizabeth had no Social Security income and appear to have relied on Edward's earnings and a small portfolio of stocks.

Over many years, Elizabeth had quietly set aside small amounts from the weekly household allowance Edward provided to run the family. The amount was one she requested and received regularly, without question. After Edward's illness and death, Elizabeth revealed a bank book showing these

[21] United States Census, 1950", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:6X1J-GDMX: Thu Oct 05 10:04:39 UTC 2023), Entry for Edward P Whalen and Elizabeth L Whalen, 14 April 1950.

[22] "Michigan Obituaries, 1820-2006", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVJ1-GNLX: Sun Jul 21 10:50:17 UTC 2024), Entry for Gerald E Roach and Thomas G Roach, 1953.

accumulated savings. The funds provided the means for her to live in the years that followed.

11 Nov 1960 – **Death of husband Edward Paul Whalen** at St. Francis Hospital in Evanston, Cook, Illinois. Their home address was 6025 Maplewood in Chicago.[23]

14 Jun 1964 Death at Wilmette, Cook, Illinois.[24]

Jun 1964 – **Burial** at All Saints Cemetery in Des Plaines, Cook, Illinois.[25]

Correction to her obituary. It was from St. Ita's Church, not St. Edith's Church.

[23] "Illinois, Cook County Deaths, 1871-1998", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2MC-QBWV: Fri Mar 08 05:00:56 UTC 2024), Entry for Edward P Whalen and James Whalen, 11 Nov 1960.

[24] Cook County Department of Public Health (Illinois) death certificate no. 2784 (1964), death of Elizabeth L. Whalen.

[25] "Find a Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVVV-675L: 24 February 2022), Elizabeth Louise Roach Whalen, ; Burial, Des Plaines, Cook, Illinois, United States of America, All Saints Catholic Cemetery and Mausoleum; citing record ID 23359911, *Find a Grave*, http://www.findagrave.com.